DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 335 757 EA 023 225

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TITLE Decentralization--The Case of Sweden.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 3-7, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Decentralization; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Governance; *Government School Relationship; Policy Formation; Political Influences; *Political Power; *Politics of Education; Power Structure; School Restructuring; Social Control
IDENTIFIERS *Sweden

ABSTRACT

Recent changes in and issues related to political authority and educational policy, specifically, decentralization and school responsibility, are examined in this paper. The following concerns are discussed: new administrative structures for states and municipalities; allocation of block grants; political and professional control of goals, curriculum, and evaluation; and rules for local school organization, teacher employment, and national teacher education. Analysis of recent developments demonstrate the political system's attempt to increase control over teachers, which, combined with decentralization, has created new patterns of control. Arguments are made for increased teacher empowerment and school autonomy. A conclusion is that, although the national political system will eventually affect local political climates, inherent forces within the schools will operate for a long time despite national policy changes. As the political education system becomes more deconcentrated, control of teachers by local politicians will increase. (20 references) (LMI)

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Decentralization - the case of Sweden

Background draft for the Boyd et al book-project *"Quality, Equality and Control in Education: International Responses Along the Centralization - Decentralization Continuum."* ; presented at the AERA-conference in Chicago, ~~March~~ April 3-7, 1991.

New modes of control

are now rapidly introduced into the Swedish school system (by the Swedish school system is meant the comprehensive school, the upper secondary school, and the adult education). This is officially called decentralization and more specifically "goal steering." It is connected to corresponding reforms within the rest of the public sector, and is accompanied by political debates about the fate of the welfare state.

The decentralization as policy was suggested in the late seventies and first adopted by the Liberal, Center and Conservative parties while it was resisted by the Social Democrats. The latter party, however, changed its mind during the middle of the eighties. From that time it is a main and recurring reform attempt under the supervision of the Social Democrats, the governing party of the eighties and before that during more than 40 years of recent history. It is a decentralization from above, as in many other countries.

Decentralization is a question of control over education and its results. Looking closer to its present form one obviously finds a decentralization mainly aiming at re-designing the political influence, and not to any important extent aiming to increase the influence of other stake-holders. It should perhaps better be called deconcentration (Lyon 1985), i.e. local political actors are allowed a greater participation in the planning and decision process while at the same time important instruments for control are kept at the central, national level.

The decentralization or deconcentration takes place within a very strong bureaucratic tradition. This tradition has defended an administrative clear chain of responsibility anchoring the bureaucracy to political power. According to Gunnel Gustafsson & Anders Lidström (1991) this is re-inforced by the traditional "concensus-culture" within the homogeneous Swedish society. The central and the local level strives to think in accord with each other.

EA 023 225

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Jon Lauglo (1985, p 136) says that in Sweden "school is an extension of political authority." However this description have some important limitations, which have been more obvious over time:

- o It mirrors a viable ideal picture within the political system itself.

  For some years its empirical validity have been questioned even by the politicians themselves.

  The normative validity of the expression is however still very potent among the Social Democrats. On the other hand, there is a decisive different attitude to this held by the Conservatives, the leading party within the opposition. They resist this ideal, at least for the local level, the level which is intended by all to be more and more important.

About the empirical validity of the picture: Sten Jönsson (1982) have analyzed how contradictions between the principally closed, long-term oriented bureaucratic planning, and the principally open, conflict oriented and short-term reacting political decision-making blocked each other during the seventies in Göteborg, the second largest city in Sweden. Gunnel Gustafsson (1987) has studied how the bureaucratic planning model generally show clear signs of disorganization during the eighties. Several researchers are now inclined to see the expansionperiod of the fifties and sixties as an exceptional state of affairs and a frame-work for rational planning that will eventually not come back.

Political analysts tell the story of a declining legitimization for the political governing model in Sweden, all though it is fairly high compared to many other countries, as it generally is in the Nordic countries. Gustafsson & Lidström (op.cit) point to the political instability caused by the decreasing relative importance of the worker class in elections. The economic stagnation and budget cuts has caused mistrust in the obligations of the state to secure welfare institutions.

Another limitation for the assumed influence on schooling of political authority:

- o Political authority has, within the educational system, mostly succeded in changing the structural features of schooling. But the radical ambitions of equality have not been fulfilled. The aim to change modes of instruction towards more pupil indepedence, cooperation and influence have only to some, limited extent succeded.

Educational policy has not in any important ways succeded to raise the proportional recruitment of workers' children to higher studies and not

decreased the actual drop out from the comprehensive school (though this is fairly low in comparison with many other countries). A more permanent result, however, is that the school structure does not lock children up into preformed study lines by which their educational future, and to a certain extent their social future, is determined. 85 per cent of every batch of youth goes through the upper secondary school for either pre-academic or vocational training. The adult education makes it relatively easy to take up studies again. Structural reforms thus have given Sweden a more flexible system for social mobility, even if its over all effect is far from expectations.

One reason for blocked radical ambitions is the segregation within housing. Due to intensified urbanization this phenomenon increased during the seventies and eighties, which meant that children from different social classes to a greater extent were placed within different school classes and schools (Arnman & Jönsson, 1983).

Gustafsson & Lidström (op.cit.) fear a new definition of educational equality which they can see is emerging. Instead of equal opportunities to the same education there is gradually more talking about equal opportunities to education of the same value. The greater freedom to local curriculum management will give pupils options for education of roughly the same value, but not necessarily options to the same education. There could be a transfer to even more varying local policy outputs, and by the time to an output which will challenge the notion of "fairness", still held as a basic value in the Swedish welfare model.

The very fact that Swedish bureaucracy has been relatively stronger than in the other Scandinavian countries, perhaps due to a stronger economy, can be one explanation to the more far-reaching structural Swedish reforms. At the same time policy formulation has also been more radical, partly because it has,more than within other Scandinavian countries, succeded in keeping the acedemic stake holders in a marginal position in relation to it (Lauglo, op.cit).

Implementation methods may, however, have caused negative side-effects with the defeat of subject teachers, and the incapacity of bureaucracy to turn structural victories into substantive ones. Jon Lauglo, therefore (op.cit., p 129) says: ..."in the short run there has been a dilemma: the strategy needed to bring about major change in school structure may have been counterproductive in terms of stimulating pedagogical renewal. And yet, it has been claimed that such renewal is required by the structural reorganization of the schools."

Malfunctions of the political-bureaucratic model in its own very structures and processes, and for its educational results, are then motives for trying something else, which came to be decentralization.

Ulf P. Lundgren & Kerstin Mattsson (1991) argues that the economic stagnation sharpens the necessity to be aware both of the economic costs for and the possible investments profits of education. There is a need for a new division of labour between the center and the periphery. There is a role for centralistic planning of education for the labor force at the national level, and decentralization seems to give a solution to the problems of cost-effectiveness.

The new steering model will thus encourage the state to monitor and guard the productivity in education while the local level must monitor and guard efficiency. This implies that policy contains two parallell modes of control - centralization and decentralization. Centralization will take care of goals and evaluation. Decentralization will take care of school improvement.

Recent reforms for the upper secondary level take these two routes. A structural reform effects the programstructure for the whole upper secondary school, and within that the vocational programs have been extended from two to three years and a new syllabus-model has been introduced. At the same time the curriculum reform was anticipated by a voluntary developmental program regarding the inner work of the upper secondary school.

Two important ways of gaining legitimacy for the political system is 1) by showing itself potent in actions, i.e. have a high implementation capacity for reforms; 2) by supplying the people with reforms in respons to its needs.

The second way is more and more becoming the hard way because of economic stagnation and political refusal of the middle class to pay more taxes on the margin. The political system then takes the other route. When Lundgren & Mattsson (op.cit) defines the task for local improvement work as better efficiency it means that cost-effectiveness is more important than substantive advancement in relation to over-arching goals.It could also mean that the process of improvement and the commitment to this is the important measure of effiency. Lauglo (op.cit p. 141) has done this interpretation of decentralization in Scandinavia: "The goal then becomes to create a climate of change rather than change in a particular specified direction ... a climate of critical self-evaluation and commitment to improvement."

This is in accord with the suspicion by Gustafsson & Lidström, that the political system and the bureaucracy will redefine the equality concept rather than try to pursue it in spite of the difficulties. By doing this the

central level, now responsible for ideological action, can let the local level be the real guardian of equality goals. Thereby it escapes both the present implementation problems of radical reform attempts, and the new problems of making priorities within limiting resources.

The question now is, according to Gustafsson & Lidström, wether the local level will take the superimposed responsibility, or if it is going to export its problems downward in the political system or back to families or individuals. Traditionally municipalities have a strong political authority by their right to put taxes on inhabitants (about 30%), their wide service supply to inhabitants, and by their accountability through elections. But recent trends seek to split up municipal authority in at least "soft" questions like school, culture etc into sub-local political bodies.

An important question is, thus, about the authority and the capacity of the municipalities to handle the new responsibilities.

Another important question is how the schools themselves will react to decentralization, and what capacity they have for the improvement work expected of them. This will be a problem of:

- the control of teachers at the local level by the political system, and by the micro-politics within schools;
- the prospects of a professionalization of teachers;
- the capacities of leadership in schools. As Lundgren & Mattsson say: school leaders seems to have been given the task to integrate the centralization and decentralization movements... "An integration that is school improvement."

The above discussed issues will be elaborated more below as we give a more detailed description of the recent changes in the Swedish school system. This is done by taking up the control measures most effected by the reform policy

New administrative structures for the state and munipalities

In the autumn of 1990 all civil servants at the National Board of Education and the Regional State Boards of Education were fired. At the same time a re-structuring of both the central and regional administration was announced, but it was stated that the earlier staff would have no priority positions for the new jobs. The new administrative body will also be considerably smaller. As director general was appointed Ulf P. Lundgren, professor of pedagogy, and consultant to the minister of Education in the

on-going school reforms. He is now choosing the other top-chiefs of his organization.

This type of re-organization have been attempted in several other contemporary cases within the state bureaucracy, but most of them have been forced by the government to recruite its new staff among the former staff in the first place. The change in task structure for the administration in education is said to be of unique magnitude. Evaluation is going to be the primary responsibility for the new administration and its regional bodies, and together with this goes the specification of more clear goals for the schools. This work will be done in close cooperation with the government. Goals and evaluation will be the main formal steering instruments to balance the new freedom given to municipalities within the other control areas.

The municipalities have been governed by laws stipulating what kind of board organization they need for different planning and services. This legislation was abolished last year. In many sectors this have caused fears that weaker and more vulnerable interests by integration into stronger boards would loose competence and direct access to the local government. So is, e.g. the case with health and environment boards, which sometimes are integrated into building and physical resource planning boards. There are intentions to integrate local political and administrative responsibilities within the sectors of schooling, culture and the leisure activities for youth respectively.

More far reaching experiments are done within some municipalities to reorganize the administrative and political bodies geographically. This is done with governmental support and initiatives. Instead of only integrating some boards, new small local political bodies - abbreviated as KDN's - are put up with the responsibility for integrated sectors of schooling, social aid, leisure and culture. However these bodies do not have the right to put taxes or charges on their inhabitants, nor are they locally elected. They get their money from the municipality government, and politically every one of them totally reflect the election results for the whole municipality.

The reform has been interpreted as a shift in steering principles as the earlier ones failed as a result of the economic stagnation during the seventies (Czarniazwska-Joerges, 1988). The political system has been used to ecological steering, that is by increasing (mostly) and decreasing (seldom) the amount of money for sectors these could produce more or less service. In the face of stagnation it can be predicted that the next strategy will be ideological steering, and only after that, or in connection with that, real actions will be taken for new organization, new technics etc. The ideology is "deepend democracy by decentralization". Its main function is to legitimize actions taken in its name, and this ideology is virtually irresistible, once it

has massive political support. The types of action so legitimized could however vary to a great extent.

According to Barbara Czarniazwska-Joerges the KDN-reform most likely has this over-arching ideological character. But one of the main reasons for the reform has also been the intention of the political system to shift the balance of power between politicians and administrators. A centralized and specialized administration is split up into smaller, less specialized bodies in more direct contact with the politicians.

Using this interpretation, then, decentralization by KDNs could be seen as a deconcentration on the local level and at the same time a shift in balance toward more politicial control visavi the administration. This is a parallel to what is taking place at the national level, but we must remind ourselves that KDNs exist only in somewhat more than 10 per cent of the Swedish municipalities.

Finance: Block grants for municipalities to allocate

o The state abolished last winter such regulations which gave the state a decisive influence over teacher salaries and employment. These responsibilities were given to the municipalities. At the time the latter payed for somewhat more than half of the total school budget and the state for the rest. These relations is said to be continued (Government's Bill 1990/91:18).

o The state grants system was changed so that all regulations binding money to special kinds of school organization and use of time within instruction was abolished. Instead the municipalities are given a block grant for all three school forms within the school system and no state conditions for the allocation of them are given, but the striving to fulfill national goals. Those municipalities which do not organize upper secondary schooling by themselves should buy it from other municipalities as they are forced by law to supply some kind of upper secondary education for the youth who demands it.

The state grant is not tied to individual pupils in a direct way. It is not intended to be a voucher system.

The former grant system made it necessary for the state to negotiate the terms of employment with the teacher unions as these terms directly effected the grants of the state. The new system is not tied to the teacher salaries, which will give the state better possibilities of ruling by cash-limits.

The new system aims at giving the municipalities incentives both for rationalizing the organization for instruction and to keep a higher ambition level than other municipalities. The former system made the upper and the lower level of time used for teacher instruction identical with very little room for allocations within that limit.

The basic state grant for the comprehensive school will cover 88 per cent of the total state grant. The grant is not perfectly proportional to pupil frequencies, it also takes into account structural differencies between municipalities. The basic structural requisite is number of pupils per square kilometre and the grant is somewhat differentiated to this. Municipalities with increasing pupil frequencies will over time have its grant per pupil somewhat reduced. Municipalities with decreasing pupil frequencies will over time have its grant per pupil somewhat increased.

12 per cent of the total grant to the comprehensive school belongs to two kinds of special grants - one based on an aggregated and weighted index of per cent inhabitants in the municipality with only compulsory education, per cent children in households which are given need related aid for daily living and per cent children living with only one of its parents; the other based on an index of per cent children with at least one parent born outside Sweden and a factor measuring the extent to which these pupils use special instruction in their home language and in Swedish.

All grants are based on regular national statistics, and will need no applying or negotiating to be calculated.

Goals, curriculum and evaluation: Political and professional control

The new mode of control is labeled "goal steering." National goals will be more precisely formulated and more thoroughly evaluated:

1. Inspection and evaluation by regional state authorities will focus more on municipalities than on schools. As a possible penalty on municipalities for not following national goals decreased state funding is mentioned. Evaluation is also assumed to play an important role together with local planning at school boards and schools;

2. National test based assessment will comprise more subjects and more grades than before.

The test program under development has caused fierce scientific conflict. In spite of attempts to measure complex understanding and skills, it is attacked for its stronger controlling function per se (Franke-Wikberg 1989). One of the hardest critics against the test program is professor Ulf P. Lundgren,

newly appointed chief of the restructured National Board of Education. No one dares to guess what this will mean for the program in the future. The Minister of Education, who appointed Lundgren, is in favor of national assessments, but has not yet reached any decision about it. It is a very open question whether he will be Minister of Education or Minister at all after the elections in September. The opinion polls tell that the Social Democrats will loose power and that they will do their worst election since the thirties.

Sweden have used national curricula since 1919. During the fifties and sixties they grew more detailed in syllabuses and time-tables at the same time as over-arching goals of progressivistic flavour were also more sophisticated in formulation. This is a contradiction often pointed to.

1980 the upper classes of the comprehensive school was given 11 per cent of its time-table free for locally constructed thematic studies. These were not popular among teachers, who mostly succeded in avoiding a thematic organization of the content. A government bill (1990/91: 85) this spring suggests more freedom for the upper secondary schools to construct own syllabuses for local subjects and courses and for pupils to choose among them. These subjects and courses will comprise 10-13 per cent of the time-table in the two most academic programs and 6-8 per cent in other programs. Munipalities and individual pupils will also under certain conditions have the right to compose own programs by combining elements from the national programs.

13 of the 16 national programs are vocational. All programs take three years. After two years of vocational training it will be possible to make the last year a preparatory year for university studies by incorporating subjects from non-vocational programs.

For the first time in modern history the government starts a curriculum planning program for all different stages of schooling for children and teenagers, which will be coordinated both with regard to content and in time. This program will at least have a better chance of avoiding the usual rivalry between teacher categories that plagues so much other planning.

Local curriculum planning and management have during the eighties been stimulated by special state funding for improvement work (and also - but not with good effect, se below - by the obligation for comprehensive schools to make so called working plans in order to interprete national goals). During most of the decade this funding was almost doubled by governmental initiatives at both comprehensive, upper secondary schools and adult education schools.

In the case of successful improvement work on a large scale, it is argued that this work, including the negotiating around it, differentiate the influence of

teachers according to their attitude to social complexity, a concept partly derived from "critical interaction" (Fullan, 1982). This has been demonstrated in five upper secondary schools (Hägglund & Lander, 1991), but should by inference hold also for other schools.

Teachers high in social complexity attitudes are more inclined to improvement work and to train pupils in independent working habits. In upper secondary schools the new central curriculum (as noted above) will increase the possibilities to make local programs and subjects, and the pupils possibilities to choose content of their schooling. According to a study of four schools such subjects had by far more potential room for independent working methods than regular subjects (Hägglund & Lander, 1989).

This situation will to some extent increase pupil control. It is likely to increase control over curriculum for those teachers most engaged in curriculum management, eventually by some form of informal coalition between pupils and teachers.

The potential shift in power balance between different teacher groups means more potential allies for school leaders seeking improvements, and thereby also a strengthening of their control over school affairs. More teachers could also be potential allies to national policy makers. The term potential should be stressed in both respects, as the data indicate that the teachers with high social complexity attitudes are willing to cooperate with leadership, but not unconditionally, and that they are most inclined to peer cooperation as a means for developing themselves both professionally and personally.

This must be seen in a long perspective and with full knowledge of the fragile foundations for the eventually emerging new power balance among teachers. Still, the national policy demands this kind of change of internal control in order to realize the hopes for professionalization of teachers. One condition, thus, seems to be extra funding for improvement work.

Teachers as professionals have in a very short time been a new and widely adopted habit of speaking in Sweden. Researchers started the discussion (e.g. Berg, 1983), but their prudent definitions and restrictions were taken no notice of by school administrators and politicians, who most likely, by using the concept, saw a way of rewarding teachers without paying for it. Teachers and teacher unions soon found the concept to be a potential weapon for claims of individual autonomy.

Against this, Kjell Granström (1991) argues that "professional status cannot be granted, it has to be aquired." Conditions of the latter is not too good as teachers have difficulties in overcoming the dependency attitude and lack of necessary skills that centuries of hierarchical governing have given them. In

spite of decentralization ambitions there is a heavy mistrust of teacher responsibility from school boards and school leaders when it comes to real empowerment. This could not be a reality unless teachers are allowed to control operative means for instructional planning, above all economic resources, a practice that today is too rare in Swedish schools.

By studies of Swedish teacher teams Granström notices that rational activity in most teams is hampered by regressive non-work acitivity with a lot of defence strategies operating. In another study teachers was demonstrated to show a high frequency of dependence behaviour compared to staffs of business companies. Collective regression have no correlation with intellectual ability or educational level of individuals.

Rules and regulations for the local school organization, conditions of teacher employment, and for national teacher education

During the eigthies there has been a most deliberate intention from the political system to support the authoritative role of the principal or head-master within the school. School leader education exists since 1976. It has essentially trained the pedagogical leadership of headmasters and deputy headmasters (vice principals), and manifested a strong ideological com-mitment to this role. The head teachers for subject departements were 1988 redefined as teachers with special functions and their responsibility was widened. At the primary level they function as leaders of the teacher teams, which since 1980 are the official planning units for instruction and pupil care within the comprehensive school. At lower secondary level they share their responsibilities among subject departements and the teacher teams, although the lesser units seldom function well among subject teachers. The functions of teacher teams at primary level have been slowly, but increasingly, better (Ekholm, Fransson & Lander, 1987).

Teachers with special functions were earlier payed by the same grant as the school leaders (as indicated above today no special grant of that sort exists). They could therefore be called middle management staff. On the other hand they could be used by the teachers for a more cooperative pattern of work and seen as representatives of collective bodies. There is a tendency to integrate these functions in many schools as the management function is organized on a more collective base, with more co-planning between school leaders, teachers with special functions and other representatives of the staff (For the comprehensive school, see Ekholm, Fransson & Lander op. cit; for the upper secondary school, see Hägglund & Lander, 1989).

During 1990 it was decided that only the position of the head master is to be regulated by law and that other leadership functions are free for the school board to organize as it likes. The bill (1990/91:18, p 34) declares that the

only regulation left for the head master is that his "area of responsibility must not be greater than it will allow him to have intimate knowledge of the daily work at the school." In an earlier bill this was said to increase the administrative and personal service to teachers from the school leaders. Today the head master (and ordinarily one or two deputy head masters) take care of one to ten school buildings within a "school management area". But the new rules of management could also be interpreted as a step to more direct control of the teachers.

Today teachers is the only big group of civil servants with higher education not having individual wages. They resist this most sincerely. If the political system wants to go further with this issue one can see that the management function now is better prepared for deciding on individual salaries. It was earlier not possible for school leaders to know the achievements of individual teachers well. This coincides with the last years' striving from the central and local school administrations and the school leader education to have school leaders perform regular individual, developmental talks with teachers.

Anyhow this will tie teachers' definition of competence more close to school leader assessments. The same is true about the changing praxis for need assessment within in-service training. It was earlier the norm, and still is so at many schools, that in-service training was a remuneration to individual teachers. Now it is increasingly becoming a collective decision by teacher groups and school leaders for the benefit of the teacher team, the subject departement, or the school.

Teachers' in-service training will be a responsibility for municipalities as the state boards for in-service training are abolished in 1991. They administered the state grants and decided the supply of courses for in-service training at the universities and schools of teacher education with the help of an annual priority list from the National Board of Education. Today's state grants for these activities will in the future go directly to the municipalities, but not earmarked for this. There will, however, be a law compelling municipalities to take responsibility for the matter. Universities etc will any way have to compete more for their share of these money with private agencies and with training set up by the municipalities and the schools themselves.

A requisite for more local planning of in-service training is the capacity of the local politicians and school administrators to judge the merits of its school system and to plan for improvements of it. In order to stimulate a process of more local planning the parliament has stated that so called school plans, made by the school board, are to be obligatory (Governm. bill 1989/90:41). These will over three years, but revised annually, give priorities for school improvement within national goals, and constitute the

base for evaluating the schools. Since 1980 comprehensive schools have been compelled to do working plans, as mentioned above, and now the same is true for upper secondary schools. The intentions for the comprehensive schools have, however, not been fulfilled to any significant degree (Ekholm, Fransson & Lander, op.cit.), but it is likely that the political school plans will stimulate the use of working plans. There is now a tremendous demand from schools about training in evaluation techniques.

Teachers' employment have been regulated by a most extreme form of bureaucratic pointsystems, which only counted formal credentials and anciennity. This is now to some extent loosened up so that local needs for special competencies is more possible to meet. In the bill of 1990/91:18 (p 38) it is especially stated that municipalities shall not in the future be forced to use a teacher, "who has the right education, but who nevertheless is not appropriate to use for the benefit of the pupils." The sheltering of incompetent teachers by the rule system and the vetopower of unions in this issue have been under slow erosion for some years, but this bill will probably give the municipalities more courage to act according to its intentions.

By the wage agreement with the unions 1989, mentioned above, the work-time, outside instruction time, that the teacher must allocate to the school building increased up to a total of 5 hours a week (Swedish comprehensive teachers lecture 24 40-minute hours a week if they are subject teachers, and 28 if they are class teachers). Some part of the holidays for teachers were transformed into obligatory in-service training time, up to 24 days per three years, an increasement with 9 days. At the same time the parliament decided to change the responsibility for teachers' employment conditions and salaries from the state to the municipalities.

Beside direct control of the time allocation former decided by the individual teacher, this also ment increased control of the individual teachers priorities in work by teacher collectives and school leaders. All this made the subject teacher union to go to strike, which they however lost.

The primary teachers' union did not fight the agreement offer, probably because they were favoured by the conditions. A most significant raise in wages was offered. Especially important for their teachers was the status-increase implied by the rule that teachers of all kinds, within the comprehensive school, are going to reach the same salary the last years before retirement (in spite of the fact that subject teachers still will have higher wages when they begin and by that somewhat more totally). Subject teachers did also get higher earnings, especially compared to other civil servants, but not as much as the primary teachers.

Many subject teachers interpreted the governments agreement offer as another blow to their professional self-esteem and worth. A large portion of them consider themselves the victims of ideological war-fare from the progressivists within several political parties, but especially the Social Democrats. Teacher education is a new frontier in this conflict.

After many years of commission work and investigations a new teacher education has been adopted, which is said to conforme to the needs of the central curriculum for the comprehensive school of 1980 (still in use). Most important is that the responsibility for grades, former divided upon different teacher categories for grade 1-3, 4-6 and 7-9, will be changed into responsibilities for one of two, partly overlapping categories, grade 1-7 and 4-9.

The difference between class teachers and subject teachers will be somewhat diminished, as class teachers will specialize to some extent in either Swedish and social studies or arithmetic and science. More weight is laid upon the integration in actual teaching of the subjects comprised by the labels "social studies" and "science studies". This is also intended to decrease the number of subject teachers every pupil will meet during grade 7-9, and cooperation within teacher teams will at the same time be easier as this kind of subject teacher can have most of his or her duty within the classes of one team.

Together with the basic teacher education the same change is stimulated by a state sponsored in-service training program intented to be in use for ten years. Another change in teacher categories will probably follow from this years decision to open the comprehensive school for children of six years, traditionally school starts at seven. An intensified cooperation between pre-school teachers and primary teachers will be necessary. State sponsored developmental work supported this kind of cooperation during the eigthies, and some municipalities try to push change further by integrating pre-schools in school buildings and stimulate grade free primary education.

The decision to give the option for parents to let their children start school at six is most likely motivated by the need to reduce costs for securing pre-school children day-care for every parent who demands it (a promise often repeted by the government; most childrens day-care, and the only part with public funding, is supplied by municipal agencies or, to a small extent, by parent cooperatives). Nevertheless the decision goes well into a broader policy of dissolving what Basil Bernstein (1973) calls the classification mode of control. By tradition the classification of the Swedish comprehensive system is the most far reaching among the Scandinavian countries (Lauglo op cit).

Also in terms of framing (Bernstein op.cit.) there is an ongoing change in the primary school meaning that methods of individualization, mostly in

Swedish and Arithmetic, is spontaneously - but supported by in-service training - spreeding among teachers. This change is not well known to scope and depth, but it is reported from case studies (Lander & Odhagen, 1991) that primary teachers and teachers with responsibility for remedial teaching are more offensive in demanding that the subject teacher system should not ignore the internal and flexible differentiation that they deliberately and for the sake of individualization have created. This issue of conflict is also coming up in the in-service training aimed at supporting new responsibilities for grading mentioned above.

Concluding remarks

The above discussed developments show obviously that the political system is trying to increase the control over teachers. All this is not motivated by decentralization or incorporated in some over all plan for this. But long term influencies interact with decentralization policies to form new patterns of control.

At the same time there is a shift in balance within the political system, a deconcentration of control. As stated before, this could well be the most important aspect of the decentralization. However this will not by itself change the mode or strength of control over schools and teachers.

Arguments are raised in favour of teacher empowerment and school autonomy, so that more professional attitudes and skills will have a better chance to meet the demands of decentralization. For quite a long time the political system have given most priority to the school leaders, and to the strenghtening of their position within schools. By the traditions of a hierarchical system this, however, might neglect the needs of the teachers. This shifts the focus of attention to the developments within schools and teacher collectives.

Another tendency is emerging, if not as clear as the first ones. There seems to be a modification in power balance between teacher categories within the comprehensive school. It is not possible to assess the relative powers, as these depend on what kind of issues you are dealing with, but a greater self-esteem and more initiatives in improvement work is seen among class teachers than by subject teachers. Class teachers are more backed by the political system, especially by the Social Democrats.

By interpreting case studies of large improvement work the inference was made that this can change power relations among teachers according to their attitudes to the complexity of social relations, which ougth to give better conditions for more improvement and for capacities of local curriculum management. On the other hand it is a necessary step to teacher

empowerment that teachers are trained for this in their daily collective planning, and not only in improvement projects. Strong arguments show that this training is slow to emerge and is not given adequate means by school leaders and school boards, above all the control of economical means is lacking.

In spite of political ambitions and some legislation there have been no break-through in the possibilities for pupils to exert control over school business. So is the case with parential influence too.

Returning to the political system, it is obvious that it is no longer as stable as it used to be. This autumn's election will eventually - or most likely - bring today's opposition into power. The most likely governmental coalition in that case will consist of two or three minor parties of liberal or center ideology and one major party - the Conservatives, the latter now having about 25 per cent of the votes in polls.

The Conservative party have sharpened its opposition to the Social Democratic school policy. The Conservatives and the Liberal party have joined with the subject teachers' union against the government on important issues. The most important difference between the Social Democrats and the Conservatives on decentralization issues is probably the relation of power between the local political system and the teachers. While the Social Democrats want to increase political power over education, the Conservatives defend individual teacher autonomy against the politicians.

In the parliament committee that dealt with the issue of making municipalities responsible for teacher's employment conditions, the Conservatives declared that this decision, although not impossible in principle, practically would do nothing to improve quality of education. It would "lead to more local political influence. The school will not be better for pupils, parents or teachers! .... (Better quality is attained) by decreasing the regulation of school work and assigning to the teachers the realization of instruction in the forms that they find best." (Committe of Education 1989/90: UbU9). Instead of more political influence the Conservatives and the Liberal party want to try a voucher system and to let parents choose what school they want their children to attend. They also want to stimulate more private education, of which there is not much in today's Sweden.

Political elections in Sweden at the same time are about both parliament and local authorities. A shift in power at the national level will probably affect the ruling majorities in municipalities too. By tradition however school issues on the local level have not been very politizied. Eventually the local political climate will change as an overall long term effect of decentralization policies on many sectors, but this is not possible to assess yet. It is a fair guess that many of the forces described above will continue to work for

a long time regardless of changes in national policies. Even a voucher system will not change much in the short run. It is likely that school politicians and school administrators will penetrate school business more intimately than before, if not for other reasons, so because of budget problems and the necessity to make priorities in face of that. The political educational system will be deconcentrated and the local politicians will as an effect of that have to control teachers more.

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